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AUTHORITARIANISM, CRITICAL THEORY, AND POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

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Psychoanalytic Marxism is responsible for developing the notion of the "authoritarian personality." Recognizing that Marx's theory of revolution contained limitations, the members of the Institute of Social Research or "Frankfurt School" (along with other kindred but unaffiliated spirits such as Wilhelm Reich) revised traditional theories of society and psyche during the early part of this century in an effort to account for the failure of revolutionary political practice amongst segments of the German working class and, relatedly, the rise of fascism.

Characteristically disenchanted with orthodoxies and dogma, Reich echoed sentiments common to Institute members when he complained that "The theoretical thinking of the Comintern leaders, in whose hands lies the fate of world revolution, has degenerated, becoming economist and mechanical; as a result, the Comintern has been regularly overtaken by events" ([1934] 1972, p.30). In the case of the Frankfurt School, the product of revisionist synthesizing and jettisoning of dogma was a unique set of theoretical optics that gathered together, *inter alia*,¹ Hegelian philosophy, Marx's theory of capitalism, and Freudian psychoanalytic theory into what we may now call *classical critical theory*.²

¹Not widely acknowledged by the Institute was its debt to the interpretive sociology of Max Weber. Along with Marx and Freud, Weber is undoubtedly the unadvertised but powerful influence we feel in the writings of many of the institute members (cf Kellner 1985) as well as many other varieties of "Western Marxism" (Dahms 1997). It might also be recalled that Erich Fromm was a sociology student at the University of Heidelberg and earned his doctorate under the guidance of Max Weber's brother, Alfred (Burston 1991, p.15). The title of Fromm's Ph.D. dissertation was "Das jüdische Gesetz. Ein Beitrag zur Soziologie des Diasporajudentums" (1922).

²My use of the phrase "classical critical theory" is virtually synonymous with what Wolfgang Bonss calls "early critical theory": the period between 1929 and 1936. In the early period of the Frankfurt School, Max Horkheimer outlined an interdisciplinary research program in which analytic social psychology

In the broadest sense possible, the project of any critical theory claiming an Hegelian-Marxist descent is to comprehend the failure of the bourgeois spirit to move beyond itself. For Hegel and Marx, the dialectical processes of society were insatiable and relentless in calling forth the negation and transcendence of existing social relations – even those predicated upon, ostensibly, iron-fisted subjugation:

just as lordship showed that its essential nature is the reverse of what it wants to be, so too servitude in its consummation will really turn into the opposite of what it immediately is; as a consciousness forced back into itself, it will withdraw into itself and be transformed into a truly independent consciousness (Hegel [1807] 1977, p.117).

Notwithstanding the theoretical and social-philosophical postulates of Hegel and Marx, domination of the working classes prevailed – and continues, evidently, to resist dissolution. "National Socialism" and the durability of capitalism in the hearts of the working classes both stand as testaments to, among other things, the seemingly eternal nature of irrational dependency relations, charismatic politics, demonization, and what Freud called the "delusions of persecution" ([1913] 1950).

The Working Class and Fascism

At the center of the Frankfurt School's early research program was the "elaboration of a theory of social development" (Fromm 1984, p.41; Horkheimer [1936b] 1992, p.54) grounded in a plan for empirically comprehending the relationship between workers and reactionary politics. Additionally, the Frankfurt theorists generated an inquiry into the failure of the proletariat to assume its historic role as the revolutionary class of the bourgeois epoch (Jay [1973] 1996). Where Marx and Lukács saw a metaphysical inevitability in working class revolution – due to, in Lukács's

augmented by political economy, philosophy, sociology, cultural theory, and history "became the pivot of a modern Marxism" (Bonss 1984, p.18). The dominant figure involved in shaping the social-psychological theory of the Institute was Erich Fromm. One could reasonably argue that Wilhelm Reich, even though he was not a member of the Institute, played a prominent role in developing the idea of the authoritarian personality in his classic work *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. See Samelson (1986, 1993) and Roiser and Willig (1995) for good sketches of Reich's importance to the early work of the Frankfurt School.

view, a special historical identity or status – the Frankfurt School perceived, instead, a huge question mark (Dubiel 1985; Jay 1984; Lukács 1971).

Perplexed by the lack of working class radicalism and progressive social change in Germany, Max Horkheimer and Erich Fromm (the two figures I shall focus on primarily) set out to interrogate and grasp not only the coercive, institutional features of modern society but also the essential psychic structure and durable dispositions of the German proletariat (Bonss 1984). As Fromm was to later say, "The question which we asked at that time was: To what extent do German workers and employees have a character structure which is opposite to the authoritarian idea of Nazism? And that implied still another question: To what extent will the German workers and employees, in the critical hour, fight Nazism?" (1963, p.148).

One of the central conclusions drawn by the Frankfurt School echoed that of la Boetie's nearly four hundred years earlier: "...naked coercion cannot by itself explain why the subject classes have borne the yoke so long in times of cultural decline, when property relationships, like existing ways of life in general, had obviously reduced social forces to immobility and the economic apparatus was ready to yield a better method of production" (Horkheimer [1936b] 1992, pp.57-8).³ In coming to the conclusion that force was insufficient in solidifying bourgeois domination, they and their fellow researchers turned their attention toward what they saw as the decisive elements involved in cultivating and prolonging "willing obedience to command" (ibid., p.69).

Phenomena they pointed to or dealt with in depth were the social and historical formation of character structure; the family as a productive organization for cultivating character traits; the

³It is...[people] themselves who permit, or, rather, bring about their own subjection....A people enslaves itself, cuts its own throat, when, having a choice between being vassals and being free men, it deserts its liberties and takes on the yoke, gives consent to its own misery, or, rather, apparently welcomes it" (la Boetie [1552-53] 1975, p.50). Cf Foucault: "What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse" (in Benjamin 1988, p.245).

cultural⁴ and religious aspects of working class life including its "fantasies" and worldview; anti-Semitism; the deification of bourgeois thought and the fetishization of rugged individualism; the dialectical and paradoxical nature of bourgeois freedom achieved through adaptation and submission; the development of institutions whose central goals were aimed at mental and physical discipline; the appropriation and employment of science for rationalizing labor processes; the coating of the mode of production and the accumulation of surplus value with a legitimating discourse; the alienation and degradation of capitalist work; the division of people and class segments into leaders and followers; and the accompanying naturalization of authority relations.

With these points either elongated or abbreviated into a larger, long-term agenda, the early Frankfurt School's critique of domination embodied much more than purely structural and institutional analyses; they placed a significant amount of explanatory capital upon the way the working classes thought and felt as a determining factor in their mode of existence – especially in terms of their orientations towards authority.⁵

⁴Culture and the culture industries were especially important in the oeuvre of the Frankfurt School and their periodic collaborators. Art, morality, romantic love and the erotic sphere, literature and poetry, and theater were all opened to analysis (Benjamin 1968; Horkheimer [1936b] 1992; Kracauer 1995; Marcuse [1937] 1968). Further, the impact of science and the subjugation of aesthetic production to capitalist labor processes became a cornerstone of critical theory especially latter on in the work of Horkheimer and Adorno (Adorno 1994; Benjamin 1968a; Horkheimer and Adorno [1944] 1993; Kracauer 1995). Kracauer was not an official member of the Institute but his work and influence on Institute members (especially Adorno) would be impossible to overestimate. His "Mass Ornament" essay provides an especially brilliant critique of Taylorist incursions into the realm of mass entertainment.

⁵Aronowitz has been one of the few sociologists to draw out the aspects of self-domination in the working class. As he stated, "Daily life provides clues for both the liberatory and the authoritarian tendencies within the working class as well as all social groups. It is the critical institutions of family, peer groups, school, church and the voluntary association, and the workplace itself that structure the way people respond to events as well as create them" ([1973] 1992, p.55).

Character and Social Stability

Confronting the limitations of classical Marxism as an explanatory lens vis-à-vis the social psychology of the working classes, Horkheimer wrote that "...the way in which men act at a given point in time can not be explained solely by economic events which have transpired in the immediate past."

It is rather the case that particular groups react according to the special character of their members and that this character has been formed in the course of earlier no less than of present social development....To understand why a society functions in a certain way, why it is stable or dissolves, demands therefore a knowledge of the contemporary psychic make-up of men in various groups. This in turn requires a knowledge of how their character has been formed in interaction with all the shaping cultural forces of the time ([1936b] 1992, pp.53-54).

This stance toward the formation of character, its dissolution and stability, brought Horkheimer and Fromm into close proximity with the pioneering work of Max Weber.

The Institute may have cringed at his politics, but they did possess the wherewithal and clarity of vision to appropriate Weber's insights into the historical transformation of character and work under the weight of Protestantism. Central for both Weber and the Frankfurt theorists was the formation of an ethically motivated class of workers capable of willingly placing themselves at the disposal of another class.⁶ Fromm and Weber came to similar conclusions regarding the capacity of the working class to lead in democratic and progressive directions. "Weber was...willing" says Goldman "to consider the potential of the working class for leadership in state and society, but through its trade unions and party it had become too bureaucratically disciplined [and submission oriented] to be capable of action, initiative, and responsibility" (1993, p.174).

⁶Perennially, Weber's "Protestant ethic thesis" is pronounced dead. Recently, Richard Hamilton has joined in the chorus in his 1996 book *The Social Misconstruction of Reality*. Rather than devote space here to the complexities of this debate I shall, instead, point readers to the edited volume by Lehmann and Roth (1993).

For Weber, the early Puritans demonstrated that the rationalization of their life-conduct was a source of strength: a tool of power in the face of overwhelming, cosmic despair. However, he also realized that the institutionalization of an ethical orientation "threatens", according to Goldman, "to impose itself totally on self and society, depriving [people] of the capacity to posit anything but their own submission" (ibid., p.166). Bourgeois society, at least the kind conditioned by the cultural and institutional remnants of a puritanical ethos, became infused with an "obedient accommodation" and pervasive submissiveness (ibid., p.173). Indebted to Weber, Fromm early on pointed out the decisive importance of the new capitalist spirit. Fromm's theory of class subordination turned on the cultural and political shifts that followed from the cultural ascendancy of a Calvinist ethic of life-conduct (cf Marcuse [1936] 1972). The spirit of capitalism, according to Weber and Fromm, had eradicated the notion of happiness and enjoyment in the world and replaced it with iron-clad duty (Fromm [1932b] 1970).⁷

The use-value of Fromm's undertaking was decided by its ability to account for the processes of social change and historical arrest as they related to the formation of structured subjectivity: "Suppose we ask which forces maintain the stability of a given society and which undermine it" ([1932a] 1970, p.158). The answer at the time was to be located in the libidinal strivings (later called passionate forces) and emotional, desire driven relationships obtaining between ruling classes and their attendants. Libidinal strivings, determined by the economic mode of production and mediated by the family, culture, and educational institutions (Horkheimer [1936b] 1992), were, on the one hand, "cement" for social stability and dependency, and, on the other, the source of potential change (ibid., pp.158-61; cf Baran [1959] 1969). In brief, Fromm's theory of societal movement located the source of human resistance to progressive change and positive freedom within the characterological dispositions of the working and lower middle classes ([1932a] 1970; 1941).

⁷From the Weberian perspective, then, social change depends not only on impersonal forces but on a puritanical *ethos* or spirit "capable of overcoming resistance and commanding obedience" (Goldman 1993, p.169). Revolution is possible "...when, and only when, individuals or groups of individuals develop strict, ethically regulated ways of conducting their lives..." (Mommson 1989, p.156).

Compressed to its maximum and worked out in greater detail in *Escape from Freedom* (1941), Fromm's model of change articulated the tremendous potentials for authentic (positive) freedom that modernity had opened by breaking down traditional dependency and modes of servitude and, simultaneously, the inner isolation, ambivalence, and powerlessness, created by industrial and monopoly capitalism and the tendency for people to evade their responsibilities and freedoms by turning to the strong leader and structures of mass authoritarianism for salvation and redemption. With *Escape*, authoritarianism, destructiveness, and automaton conformity, were conceptualized as mechanisms of escape – the negative substitutes for positive freedom.

Authoritarianism

The sociological phenomenon of authoritarianism is historically rooted in the Freudian concept of "moral masochism" and expresses a modulation of the concept of sadomasochism. Freud ([1905] 1962, pp.47-50) credited Krafft-Ebing with bringing the categories of "masochism" and "sadism" to life for his own theories of sexual perversion.

Krafft-Ebing, Freud and Sadomasochism

Krafft-Ebing's theory of sadism and masochism was greatly inspired by the psychological processes he found in the literature and poetry of von Kleist's sadistic "Penthesilea" and its masochistic counterpart "Käthchen von Heilbronn"; Halm's "Griseldis"; von Wildenbruch's "Brunhilde"; Schiller's "Kabale und Liebe"; Rachilde's "Le Marquise de Sade"; Abbé Prévost's "Manon Sescault"; George Sand's "Leone Leoni"; and the writings of von Sacher-Masoch (1906, pp.130-31, 196, 203).

The word "sadism" predated Krafft-Ebing's efforts. It had circulated and found popularity within French literary circles and within writings that resembled the Marquis de Sade's "obscene novels...of lust and cruelty." Krafft-Ebing can, however, be credited with coining the term "masochism." In explaining the origin of the concept, he stated that "I feel justified in calling this sexual anomaly 'Masochism,' because the author Sacher-Masoch frequently made this perversion, which up to this time was quite unknown to the scientific world as such, the

substratum of his writings" (ibid., p.132). Kraft-Ebing's vital insight was recognizing that "Sadism and masochism...are so related to each other, and so correspond in all points with each other, that the one allows, by analogy, a conclusion for the other" (ibid., p.215). Although Fromm more or less abandoned Freud's emphasis on sexual perversions, he retained the insight that sadism and masochism are inextricably woven together and form a unity. In making the move beyond Freud, Fromm sought to place the concept of sadomasochism upon a more sociological foundation.

Fromm and Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism is, as Fromm formulated it, "the tendency to give up the independence of one's own individual self and to fuse one's self with somebody or something outside of oneself in order to acquire strength which the individual self is lacking" (1941, pp. 140-41).⁸ Further, this symbiotic drive – rooted in the pain of weakness and isolation of the individual – is manifested, in its "more distinct forms...in the striving for submission and domination, or, as we would rather put it, in the masochistic and sadistic strivings as they exist in varying degrees in normal and neurotic persons respectively" (ibid., p.141).

Fromm called for a terminological transformation of sadomasochism into authoritarianism. "Since the term sado-masochistic is associated with ideas of perversion and neurosis, I prefer to speak, instead of the sado-masochistic character, especially when not the neurotic but the normal person is meant, of the 'authoritarian character'....This terminology was justifiable" said Fromm, "because the sado-masochistic person is always characterized by his attitude toward authority" (ibid., p.162). Authoritarianism represents, as he was to later point out, the political orientation that flows from characterological sadomasochism. The authoritarian "admires authority and tends to submit to it, but at the same time he wants to be an authority himself and have others submit to him" (ibid., p.162). Therefore,

⁸Stated somewhat better in 1955, Fromm said that the "authoritarian character structure is the character structure of a person whose sense of strength and identity is based on a symbiotic subordination to authorities, and at the same time a symbiotic domination of those submitted to his authority....This is a state of sado-masochistic symbiosis which gives [a person] a sense of strength and a sense of identity. By being part of the 'big' (whatever it is), he becomes big" (1955) 1963, pp. 149-50.

we find at the heart of authoritarianism an orientation toward objects perceived and recognized to possess power: "For the authoritarian character there exist, so to speak, to sexes: the powerful ones and the powerless ones" (ibid., p.166). In other words, the world is thought to be populated by things and individuals that are either strong or weak, powerful and powerless (cf 1963, pp.149-50).⁹ By participating in the life of something Good, strong, and glorified, the embattled and overburdened self may find a source for recognition and identity as well as protection. Likewise, by participating in the life of something Evil, authoritarians seek to scratch out an identity and grasp a meaningless and apparently incomprehensible world (cf Zizek 1989). Below I will first sketch the elements of authoritarian submission to the "hero" and, secondly, outline the dimensions of authoritarian domination.

The Charismatic Hero

How all times mischoose the objects of their adulation and reward, And how the same inexorable price must still be paid for the same great purchase.

The typical embodiments of power and strength, the entities that lend durability to the isolated and threatened, are frequently objects such as Nation, God, or charismatic political leaders endowed with "magical" or unearthly qualities. Binding oneself to one or more of these symbols of authority enables people to enlarge themselves. Emerson provided a beautiful description of this tendency in his famous "American Scholar" essay:

The poor and the low find some amends to their immense moral capacity, for their acquiescence in a political and social inferiority. They are content to be brushed like flies from the path of a great person, so that justice shall be done by him to that common nature which it is the dearest desire of all to see enlarged and glorified. They sun themselves in the great

⁹We find that for almost forty years, Fromm's theory of authoritarianism and the authoritarian character structure remained relatively stable. In *Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* Fromm formulated the phenomenon in basically the same way: "Sadism and masochism, which are invariably linked together, are opposites in behavioristic terms, but they are actually two different facets of one fundamental situation: the sense of vital impotence. Both the sadist and the masochist need another being to 'complete' them, as it were. The sadist makes another being an extension of himself; the masochist makes himself the extension of another being. Both seek a symbiotic relationship because neither has his center in himself" (1973, p.292).

man's light, and feel it to be their own element. They cast the dignity of man from their downtrodden selves upon the shoulders of a hero, and will perish to add one drop of blood to make that great heart beat, those giant sinews combat and conquer. He lives for us, and we live in him ([1837]1981, p.66).¹⁰

The charismatic authority figure (it could be called the embodiment or personification of "X" in the Frommian vocabulary) sparkles with and radiates a magical power that has been bestowed upon him or her as a gift; followers of the charismatic hero stand in the radiated glory of the leader and receive fortification.¹¹

Drawing upon the theoretical work of Fromm and others, Horkheimer emphasized the historical importance of the charismatic, "bourgeois leader" in occluding progressive social change.¹² In "Authority and the Family" Horkheimer asked: "Does unconditional submission to a political leader or a party point historically forwards or backwards?" ([1936b] 1992, p.71). As he observed, there are "exceptional moments" in history when the brutality and existential bleakness of prevailing economic and social conditions become relatively transparent ([1936a] 1993, p.60). At times, these moments lead to revolutionary change as in the case of the Reformation and the French Revolution.

¹⁰Many thanks to Dan Krier for bringing this passage to my attention.

¹¹Of course, the followers who stand in the radiated glory of the leader are only basking in their own reflected or conferred psychic energy – their surplus. Charisma is, as Weber (1978) and Durkheim ([1912] 1995) theorized, a social fact: the product of collective projection. Virtually every writer attempting to deal with the social bases of charisma expresses contradictions. Nothing is more revealing than concepts such as "pseudo" or "genuine" charisma (Friedrich and Brzezinski 1965, pp.41-44). Freud's *Totem and Taboo* provides a striking example of sociological analysis vanishing before the eye, devolving into reductionism and mythology. Not only did Freud have trouble navigating the road of truth, but Weber and Fromm as well as Horkheimer and Adorno all, at some point or another, strayed into reductionism and behavioristic explanations. One of the few scholars able to keep his gaze fixed on the problem was Durkheim (see D.N. Smith 1992).

¹²The Frankfurt School was not the only strain of critical theory to focus specifically upon "charismatic" leadership. Before its shift toward a critique of market society, the Yugoslavian *Praxis* group had engaged in a critique of Stalinism that coincided, in important ways, with the work of the Frankfurt theorists. Interestingly, Fromm served on the *Praxis* Group's Advisory Council established in 1966 (Sher 1977, pp.53, 146-50) and maintained a lively interaction with some *Praxis* Marxists.

For the capitalist classes to assume their positions of historical domination, they required the support of the masses in their struggle with feudal elements; they required the *willing* submission of the working class. As Fromm knew, Weber, more than anyone, comprehended this historical necessity in its subtlety and in a way that intersected significantly with Horkheimer's theory of the "bourgeois leader." Again, by focusing on the importance of the ethical leader, the Frankfurt theorists came into the gravitational field of Weber (cf Marcuse [1936] 1972).

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Weber illustrated an ethic working behind the backs of historical agents and through the mediation of charismatic spokespersons. As Weber stated, "From Baxter's own view-point", i.e., salesperson for the masses, "he accepted the employment of his charges in capitalistic production for the sake of his religious and ethical interests. From the standpoint of the development of capitalism these latter were brought into the service of the development of the spirit of capitalism" (1958, p.282). Weber located the importance of labor in the salvational doctrine of Luther – the intellectual father "from which the ideal of a calling and the devotion to labour in the calling has grown..." (ibid., p.78).

The historical turning point came, according to Weber, when labor acquired the *magical quality* of serving some unearthly goal. In other words, the act of laboring must acquire new meanings and cultural significance; "labor must be performed as if it were an absolute end in itself, a calling" devoted to the eternal salvation of the individual (ibid., p.62, 79). For Luther, the calling amounted to "the valuation of the fulfillment of duty in worldly affairs as the highest form which the moral activity of the individual could assume" (ibid., p.80). But Lutheranism tended to push the notion of the calling into the "background" and even "undermined the psychological foundations for a rational ethics" (ibid., p.86). Far more important was the doctrine of predestination and the way a calling was worked out by the followers of Calvin in which "only a small proportion of men are chosen for eternal grace..." (ibid., p.103; cf Marcuse [1936] 1972).

The Protestant need to externalize an index of salvation provided an impetus to worldly, routine activity – good works – as an objective and "technical means...of getting rid of the fear of damnation" (ibid., p.115). Hence, ascetic social labor (labor

fulfilling the needs of the everyday life of the community at large) and "good works" took on a magical quality because "This makes labour in the service of impersonal social usefulness appear to promote the glory of God and hence to be willed by Him" (ibid., p.109). The historical movement of the ascetic ethic and the importance of labor in a calling, propelled by reaction to the dogma of predestination, came to rest most decisively in the religious doctrines of Baxter who sold the necessity of hard, ascetic labor (as a rationalized technique for self-discipline) to the masses. Stated, "Baxter's activity...is...a typical example of how asceticism educated the masses to labour, or, in Marxian terms, to the production of surplus value, and thereby for the first time made their employment in the capitalistic labour relation...possible at all" (ibid., p.282). With Baxter, labor "came to be considered in itself the end of life, ordained as such by God" (ibid., p.159).

Ironically, the ethical slippage of Puritanism into utilitarianism preserved an ascetic fortification that insinuated itself within the working classes; as the burning passion for eternal salvation evaporated into the "iron cage" of commodity fetishism, the self-negating lifestyle of Calvinism remained. Having sold the masses on the virtue of self-denial and brutally hard work, the new bourgeois class was provided with "sober, conscientious, and unusually industrious workmen, who clung to their work as to a life purpose willed by God" (ibid., p.177) and who believed that "faithful labour, even at low wages, on the part of those whom life offers no other opportunities, is highly pleasing to God" (ibid., p.178). The historical cultivation of a class of self-negating workers could not have been accomplished without the tireless efforts of individuals like Baxter. Marx merely hinted at this dimension in his theory of revolution¹³ whereas Weber explicated this problem greatly. Horkheimer extended Weber's theory of working class character formation by articulating the essential aspect of desire.

Horkheimer knew that the political genius, the bourgeois leader, had, if there were to be any success in "leading" the masses to their salvation, to provide them with not necessarily what they deserved but what they desired. Appealing to their ideal interests such as nationalist sentiments or ethnic prejudices, the

¹³Also, Draper provides a detailed account of Marx's conceptualization of the demagogue in relation to class revolution (1977; Marx [1869] 1963).

working classes were "sold" on the virtues and long-term benefits of capitalist development: "The people are supposed to recognize that the national movement will, in the long run, bring advantages for them too" (Horkheimer [1936b] 1992, p.62; cf Hirsch 1991; Marcuse [1936] 1972). This was, however, not to be the case for laborers. "The bourgeois revolution did not lead the masses to the lasting state of joyful existence and universal equality they longed for, but to the hard reality of an individualistic social order instead" (ibid.).

The Dialectic of Domination

The ideal interests of the proletariat were purchased at the expense of their material interests. It was in this context that the "bourgeois leader" emerged to meet the psychic needs of the masses by appealing to their ambivalence of capitalist social organization and their authoritarian tendencies. The key to the logic of authoritarian, charismatic domination is that the "leader" gives the "followers" what they want, demand, or are willing to settle for. In short, far from being the master, political leaders are more slaves of their followers. Simmel located this dynamic working everywhere – even in such mundane social contexts as the schoolroom or speakers podium: "All leaders are also led; in innumerable cases, the master is the slave of his slaves" (1950, p. 185). The most stunning articulation of this dialectic of domination came from the literary quarter. Far from being manipulated from above like puppets, people actively direct their own subordination. Cipolla, the literary stand-in for Mussolini in Thomas Mann's *Mario and the Magician*, knew that his strength came from his audience – without them, he was nothing:

Cipolla moved with the bearing typical in these experiments: now groping upon a false start, now with a sudden forward thrust, now pausing as though to listen and by sudden inspiration correcting his course. The roles seemed reversed, the stream of influence was moving in the contrary direction, as the artist himself pointed out in his ceaseless flow of discourse. The suffering, receptive, performing part was now his, the will he had before imposed on others was shut out, he acted in obedience to a voiceless common will which was in the air. But he made it perfectly clear that it all came to the same thing. The capacity for self-surrender, he said, for becoming a tool, for the most unconditional and utter self-abnegation, was but the reverse side of that other power to

will and to command. Commanding and obeying formed together one single principle, one indissoluble unity; he who knew how to obey knew also how to command, and conversely; the one idea was comprehended in the other, as people and leader were comprehended in one another (1931, pp.51-52).

The subordination of the self to an object constructed and perceived to be strong, durable, and "magical" represents, however, only half of the logic of authoritarianism.

The Enemy

*Through the laughter, dancing, dining, supping, of people,
Inside of dresses and ornaments, inside of those wash'd and
trimm'd faces
Behold a secret silent loathing and despair*

Aside from subordination to the object of strength or powerful leader, the other essential aspect of authoritarianism entails an object of hatred, hostility, and potential domination. In the case of authoritarian hatred and destruction, routine or mundane scapegoats do not suffice. What is needed is a work of art or product of the imagination – something that embodies a substance as awesome as the charisma of the great man.

Charismatic leaders and objects of collective hatred represent concentrated mana. Some individuals, groups, institutions, and social formations are felt to possess a surplus of mana: an overabundance of sacredness or profanity. As Fromm said in relation to the "objects of irrational destructiveness", "the particular reasons for their being chosen are only of secondary importance; the destructive impulses are a passion within a person, and they always succeed in finding some object" (ibid., p.178). Historically, any number of objects and groups have served as objects of mass hate. Two such entities have been Freemasons and witches. One entity has emerged, however, as the object *par excellence* – the Ultra *bête noire* of modernity.

Anti-Semitism

The early Frankfurt School's attempts to grasp anti-Semitism tended toward couching the phenomenon in political-economic terms (Dubiel 1985). But their attempts to eke out a new life in

the United States during WWII brought them into contact with what was later to be known as the "Berkeley Group." The collaborative affair between the Berkeley psychologists and the Frankfurt School began as an inquiry into anti-Semitism and developed, over time, into an analysis of authoritarianism in which anti-Semitism represented one manifestation of a more generic or general psychological syndrome. The significance of anti-Semitism is reflected in Adorno's remark that "the problem of...anti-Semitism could be approached only by recourse to a theory which is beyond the scope of this study. Such a theory would neither enumerate a diversity of 'factors' nor single out a specific one as 'the' cause but rather develop a unified framework within which all the 'elements' are linked together consistently. *This would amount to nothing less than a theory of modern society as a whole*" (Adorno et al 1950, p. 608 emphasis added).

In their conclusion, the authors of *The Authoritarian Personality* noted that their analyses of the authoritarian personality demonstrated a "remarkable" similarity to Sartre's conceptualization of the anti-Semite. Levinson hinted to this early on when he said "what people say against Jews depends more upon their own psychology than upon the actual characteristics of Jews" (1950, p. 57). Sartre famously maintained that anti-Semitism had nothing to do with Jews but everything to do with anti-Semites: "If the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him" (1948, p.13). Rather than locating the source of anti-Semitic hatred within the analytic aspects of empirically existing Jews, Sartre indicated that "the Jew" was a product of the anti-Semitic imagination.

"The Jew", a pure abstraction was for Sartre nonetheless socially real as a collective representation, a social substance with concrete consequences. According to Sartre, comprehending anti-Semitism was dependent upon investigating anti-Semitism as a Manichaeian worldview or "passion" and recurring, collective response to capitalist modernity and money relations. With notable exceptions, sociology has done little to advance inquiry into anti-Semitism. Other scholars, especially historians, have pushed forward in this direction. Of notable significance for authoritarianism researchers is the work of Wilson and Volkov.

Wilson (1982) adroitly places anti-Semitism within the historical context of capitalist social relations. Making sense of one's

exploitation and estrangement can be made easier through a worldview that reduces the complexities of modern society to a limited number of "variables." What anti-Semites seek is a key that allows them to seize reality:

In its social and cultural context, antisemitism has both an internal logic and an explanatory power. Like witchcraft and other systems of belief, it explains the otherwise inexplicable, on the personal and on the social level. If anything, it is over-rational rather than 'irrational', as Adorno himself realized writing in *The Authoritarian Personality*: 'Anti-Semitic writers and agitators...have always maintained that the existence of the Jews is the *key* to everything...(Wilson 1982, p.604).

Volkov's (1978) approach focuses on the processes of "symbolic formation" or the social construction of collective representations, the utilization of anti-Semitism as a "cultural code" or "ethos" that acts as a socially unifying element, and explicitly roots anti-Semitism, at the social psychological level, in the authoritarian syndrome familiar to political psychologists. In Imperial Germany, anti-Semitism acted as a "cultural code" by providing "a sign of cultural identity....It was a way of communicating an acceptance of a particular set of ideas and a preference for specific social, political and moral norms. Contemporaries, living and acting in Imperial Germany, learned to decode the message. It became a part of their language, a familiar and convenient symbol" (Volkov 1978, pp.34-5). In short, anti-Semitism represents a "conceptual framework" that enables people to "comprehend unwanted transformations" and offers "the much sought-after clue" (ibid., p.41). Apart from Wilson and Volkov, the writings of Zizek offer interesting possibilities.

Zizek offers a Lacanian and Hegelian inspired explanation for anti-Semitism.¹⁴ According to him, "the Jew" is a symptom of the fundamental impossibility and fantasy of a unified society and the excessiveness of the anti-Semite. "The Jew" is, according to Zizek, an object that intercedes to fill the void in our essentially divided selves. As an operative aspect of reactionary social organization like Nazi Germany, "the Jew"

¹⁴Actually, one is forced to cobble together Zizek's theory of anti-Semitism from his rapidly expanding oeuvre.

is the means...of taking into account, of representing [society's] own impossibility: in its positive presence, it is only the embodiment of the ultimate impossibility of the totalitarian project -- of its immanent limit. This is why it is insufficient to designate the totalitarian project as impossible, utopian, wanting to establish a totally transparent and homogeneous society -- the problem is that in a way, totalitarian ideology knows it, recognizes it in advance: in the figure of the "Jew" it includes this knowledge in its edifice. The whole Fascist ideology is structured as a struggle against the element which holds the place of the immanent impossibility of the very Fascist project: the "Jew" is nothing but a fetishistic embodiment of a certain fundamental blockage (1989, p.127).

From the perspective of Zizek, the anti-Semite's Jew functions as a beguiling and demonic master of reality -- the other who manages to "pull the strings" of the operation behind our backs. Grabbing on to "the Jew" allows the anti-Semite to grab Truth itself: "The day that you attack the Jew, you lay hold of Reality, you measure up against your real enemy" (ibid.) Anti-Semitism also offers an inexpensive way of rejecting modernity and capitalism by "tactical departmentalizing" (Massing 1949, p.13) or fetishizing capitalist relations by representing the economic order as irreconcilably divided between industrial and finance varieties -- useful, industrial capital versus rapacious bankers and financialists.¹⁵ Hence, we find that in the hands of a semi-skilled agitator and within the psyche of the authoritarian, "the Jew" serves or can be made to serve as a shorthand for modernity and as the cause of the rupture of "traditional" social relations.

Focusing on anti-Semitism provides a great deal of illumination upon not only the problem of authoritarianism but also the dimensions of modernity and the responses toward it. What Sartre, Wilson, Volkov, and Zizek provide are ideas that move beyond the "standard theory of 'projection', according to which the anti-Semite 'projects' on to the figure of the Jew the disavowed part of himself..." (Zizek 1997, p.9); they point toward

¹⁵Father Coughlin, the Depression era Catholic priest and radio celebrity, provided his many listeners with an ideal-typical version of this capital fetishism in 1933: "The capitalist or -- to coin a more pertinent word -- the financialist and the industrialist are really two distinct persons each fulfilling a definite function in our civilization. The object of the former is to make money out of money, caring only for profits. The object of the latter -- the industrialist -- is to make things -- shoes, plows, stoves, typewriters, automobiles -- out of raw materials. He is essentially a producer. The financialist is essentially a parasite."

more sociologically informed and nuanced inquiries into this peculiar form of demonology. It is this notion of demonology, if we are to truly grasp the significance of authoritarianism, that must be addressed.

Demonology

The structural logic that characterizes anti-Semitism seems to spread itself out beyond the particularity of "the Jew" as sole collective representation. Theoretically, it is conceivable that anti-Semitism represents a particular manifestation of a general logic of demonization. However, it is clear that even if this is true, anti-Semitism still represents the culturally dominant form of demonization -- especially outside of the U.S.¹⁶

Obviously, political platforms espousing the "evil Jew" as prime "cosmic" mover generally fail to receive serious recognition in Western industrialized nations; to harangue against "the Jew" has typically amounted to political suicide during the post-Holocaust era. Demagogues have had to create new rhetoric and representations that simultaneously adhere to an authoritarian and demonological structure while eschewing, at least on the surface, utilizing "the Jew" as the focal point of direct invectives.

Importantly, then, the logic of anti-Semitism may be transposable; the demonological architecture we find in authoritarian and anti-Semitic worldviews may possess different use-values or contents (Sartre 1948, p.54). In other words, instead of Jews, other representation may be substituted as long as they are characterized by unearthly, uncanny abilities or aspects. We can, therefore, find "the Jew" being rhetorically replaced or hidden behind delusional attacks against the UN, Government, Big Brother, and the New World Order, etc. Perhaps more significantly, the architecture of the anti-Semitic worldview continues to elicit large-scale support from people who would balk at open anti-Semitism.

¹⁶ "In Poland...antisemitism is becoming the unifying identity of a nation unable to face the fact that the capitalism being rapidly introduced into the country is precisely a system of schisms amongst 'the people,' a disunity of national identity. Jews -- or rather 'the Jew' -- become the projected site of disunity that allows 'Poles' to maintain a fantasy of unity. What makes this situation's paradox particularly glaring is the fact that there are virtually no Jews in Poland" (Mertz 1995, p.79).

While supporters of Pat Robertson or Pat Buchanan, for example, may denounce anti-Semitism or simply lack an emotional or intellectual affinity to "the Jew", they may find that the worldviews and critiques of society that Buchanan and Robertson deliver are appealing due to the fact that these popular demagogues espouse an "ideology" that corresponds, *structurally*, to the belief system of the most vicious anti-Semites -- without the signifier "Jew" ever being articulated. In effect, by substituting "international cartel" for "cabal" and so forth (as the U.S. Taxpayers Party does) the result is a logical equivalent of anti-Semitism minus the Jew.

Consequently, reactionary demagogues have the benefit of emotionally appealing to their followers without revealing that they actually are, in many cases, anti-Semitic; followers benefit from the "purification" of anti-Semitic rhetoric by not being stigmatized as explicit Jew haters. It should come as no surprise that survey research seeking to determine levels of anti-Semitic "attitudes" within authoritarian respondents may find little evidence that anti-Semitism correlates with authoritarianism. By looking for the specific (hatred of the Jew) they overlook the generic structure of authoritarian hatred: the -X embodied. Rather than searching for an explicit "ideology" of anti-Semitism researchers might, instead, turn toward the elementary and relational forms of demonological belief or cultural codes that provide identities and protection from ambivalence (Volkov 1978).

From the Frommian perspective, the two moments of "the enemy" and "the hero" provide the essential, sociological and social psychological aspects of authoritarian subordination and domination.

Subsequent research added many correlates to the basic phenomenon (Adorno *et al* 1950) while some researchers latter on tended to limit their variables to a relatively few (e.g., Altemeyer). To my way of thinking, variables and aspects come and go with the contours of history and changes in society and class structures. Sometimes empirically observable aspects of authoritarianism such as anti-Semitism seem to evaporate from some contexts only to hide beneath distilled but equivalent logics.

Relatively stable are the two essential dimensions of characterologically rooted authoritarian subordination and domination that Fromm formulated early on; the rest of the syndrome, its epiphenomena, reveals itself in a multitude of ways, at times partially and in some cases in profile. Danger lies in mistaking the absence of some authoritarian traits like "conventionalism" or preoccupations with sex as posited by Adorno *et al* (1950) as indicators of declining authoritarianism.

This is precisely Bourdieu's point in making the distinction between substantivist and relational concepts and theories. In the case of authoritarian anti-Semitism, the substantivist reading would stop at the lack of visible references to "the Jew" as a refutation of the theory *in toto*. "In short," said Bourdieu, "one must be careful not to transform into necessary traits intrinsic to a particular group...the characteristics that they acquire at a given time due to the position they occupy in a determinate social space and in a determinate state of the supply of possible goods and practices" (1993, p.273).

1950: The End of the Line

The Frankfurt School's substantive interest in authoritarianism and relations of domination were at the center of critical theory in the early and mid 30's. This line of thought reached a terminal point in 1950 with the publication of *The Authoritarian Personality*. This assertion may seem counterintuitive considering the quantity of studies done on "authoritarianism" from 1950 to the present. However, as Sanford noted, the study of authoritarianism, the social phenomenon itself, was overshadowed or gave way to studies on *The Authoritarian Personality* -- the book itself (1956, p.266).

The 1940s and 50s also witnessed the spirit of the Frankfurt School break apart. The original research project into authoritarianism located at the intersection of Marxist sociology, revisionist/cultural psychoanalytic theory, and Hegelian philosophy was gone. Horkheimer and Adorno slipped away into orthodox Freudianism and nearly abandoned social theory altogether (D.N. Smith 1992). What went by the name of "critical theory" after the classical period became synonymous with Habermas. By the 1960's, psychological research into the problem had died (M. B. Smith 1987) and the only remaining

fragment of Fromm's early inquiry into the authoritarian character structure was the Berkeley F-scale with all its apparent "weaknesses" (Oesterreich 1985; Stone 1993).¹⁷

Political attacks disguised as methodological critiques like those of Hyman and Sheatsley (1954) and Shils (1954) were dominant during the 50s and 60s (see Samelson 1986, 1993; Sanford 1956; M. B. Smith 1987; Stone 1993; Stone and Smith 1993). Thus, in an attempt to avoid the political traps surrounding the rubric of authoritarianism and maintain the outward appearance of "value free" and objective science, several lines of inquiry were opened up. Rokeach's "thoroughly psychologized" concept of dogmatism, for example, was tossed about as an alternative. The original insights, theoretical array, and methods of the Frankfurt School were abandoned and reduced to mere husks. The result was devastating and the discourse centering on authoritarianism lacked its most essential aspects and strengths (Oesterreich 1985; Stone *et al* 1993, p.231).

The Renaissance of Authoritarianism Research

Since the early and mid 1980's political psychologists have been returning to the problem of authoritarianism to explain the resurgence of anti-Semitism, fascism, and ethnic violence (Altemeyer 1981, 1988, 1996; Hopf 1993; Lederer 1993; Meloen 1991; Meloen *et al* 1988; McFarland *et al* 1993). Also, sociologists, historians, and others outside of political psychology have begun to address things like sadomasochism, fascism, right-wing extremism, populism, and genocide in ways that intersect with political psychology's renewed interest in the problem (Benjamin 1988; Chancer 1992; Ewens 1984; McLaughlin 1996; D.N. Smith 1996; Volkov 1989; Wilson 1982). While these recent trends in political psychology, sociology, and history are promising -- and in the few cases cited above we find intimations of what might be achieved -- the majority of what exhibits an elective affinity with the problematic of the early Frankfurt School has yet to live up to the interdisciplinary richness of its approach.

¹⁷Sanford stated in 1973 that instead of following the lead of their work and "adapting its comprehensive, exploratory, empirical approach to the study of other problems, such as the appeals of communism or the new populism--personality psychologists have shown an obsession with the F scale" (p.163).

At the crossroads of critical theory, sociology, and social psychology, where individuals like Erich Fromm and Max Horkheimer once stood, there exists only faint traces. Few people have the inclination, resources, or the institutional support to chase these problems in a way that the phenomenon demands. Political psychology, the guardian of the flame for the last 50 years or so, has not produced a *synthetic* theory or body of research comparable in scope, complexity, or intent to that of the early Frankfurt School nor have psychologists made many attempts to incorporate a multiplicity of perspectives into their intellectual frameworks.

What now parades itself out as "critical theory" is a pale comparison to the spirit of classical critical theory. On the one hand, we find representatives who have either been pulled into the quagmire of neo-Kantian philosophy¹⁸ or have diluted critical theory to the point that only something like the Christian Temperance Union could take offense at its brazen radicalism.¹⁹ On the other hand, we find a group of post-Habermasian and self-proclaimed postmodern critical theorists orbiting journals like *Telos*. Their *raison d'être* seems to be the rehabilitation of Nazi darlings like Carl Schmitt and Ernst Jünger. The rubric "critical theory" has, in short, acquired a funny smell over the last generation or two.

In the case of sociology we find that, historically, it has had a difficult time making a name for itself. Living off the leftovers of other disciplines, academic sociology suffers from an identity crisis that has led it to, on the one hand, fetishize the very notion of discipline, and on the other, devalue or ignore other disciplines like psychology and history (see Lynd 1939, pp.11-

¹⁸Aronowitz (1994, p.240) offers a trenchant critique of Habermas, his break with Marxism, and his irrelevance for critical theory: "*Knowledge and Human Interest* concludes that the real issue for social theory is not analyzing the fissures produced by economic, political, and cultural domination; the goal is understanding our social ills as a product of what Habermas called 'distorted communication.' With this idea, he cast aside the categories of social analysis he had inherited from the Frankfurt School."

¹⁹"We might understand critical theory, I think, as the project of social theory that undertakes simultaneously critique of received categories, critique of theoretical practice, and critical substantive analysis of social life in terms of the possible, not just the actual" (Calhoun 1993, p.63).

20).²⁰ Hence, in avoiding the popular stereotype that sociology is concerned with working with people, it displays a difficulty in actually taking people seriously – that is, beyond variables in aggregate-scale models or in mere speck-like and hapless quantities that reside under "structures." It is not unusual to find, therefore, that when sociologists theorize domination and authority they tend to overlook or underemphasize the degree to which people participate in their own subjugation and how, far from being crushed by impersonal structures and organizations, people actually consent to their servitude much if not most of the time. Reich provided one of the most succinct descriptions of this intellectual (and paternalistic) tendency behind sociology:

people make possible the catastrophes under which they themselves suffer more than anyone else. *To stress this guilt on the part of masses of people, to hold them solely responsible, means to take them seriously.* On the other hand, to commiserate masses of people as victims, means to treat them as small, helpless children ([1933] 1970, p.345).

More problematic, however, is sociology's difficulty with history, its hysterical avoidance of philosophy and, relatedly, its suspicion of theory. Combining all of these problems with its fetishization of statistical analyses, methods, and measurement, sociology sometimes comes closer to *being* an authoritarian science than being able to *comprehend* authoritarianism.

Conclusion

Horkheimer knew that theories and the formation of concepts are always "grounded in the problematic of their own time" ([1936b] 1992, p.49). However, it appears that the theoretical and social problems faced by the early Frankfurt School are, if they ever did vanish, back with a vengeance. If ever there was a time for a renewed, interdisciplinary approach to authoritarianism, it is now (cf Meloen 1990, p.124). The early empirical, historical, and theoretical program of the Frankfurt School can provide

²⁰As Meloen stated, "Psychologists have contributed most of the studies in this field [of authoritarianism research], mainly because many sociologists and political scientists do not give much credit to personal motivation and reasoning that can enhance the understanding of political phenomena. The study of authoritarianism, however, cannot be limited to psychology" (1993, p.68).

individuals interested in authoritarianism a guide or inspiration to future research: research that is more symphonic than is presently the case, synthetic and problem driven rather than analytic and boundary conscious (cf Lynd 1939).

While the Frankfurt School provides us with powerful theoretical tools, we can not rest content in rehashing their achievements or restricting ourselves to their methods. In the spirit of *Aufheben*, further syntheses are required and, indeed, there are existing currents of thought that hold vast potentials; I have attempted to hint at a few of these. While most of the current research into authoritarianism tends toward positivism, comprehending and grasping authoritarianism ultimately exceeds the capacity of positivistic science. Indeed, if positivism says to us: "what you see is what you get", it is clear that authoritarian-like phenomena will always evade the "objective" gaze of positivistic inquiry. This belief was behind Sartre's provocative claim that social scientists have to comprehend the world through the one thing they share with the anti-Semite: "we believe that it is necessary to consider...social phenomenon in a spirit of synthesis" ([1948] 1976, p.59).²¹

Quantitative, survey research is indispensable. The F-scale and its progeny will, and needs, to live on. Despite many protestations, I think Meehan provides solid proof for his claim that "the F scale is an instrument for the measure of antidemocratic and fascist tendencies that has retained its validity over time" (1993, p.61) and that the F Scale could very well be "the blueprint of a general authoritarianism scale" (ibid., p.67). Measurement, however, can not satisfy the presently neglected necessity to theorize and place the phenomenon within an historical and comparative grounding (ibid.) Authoritarianism is embedded in an ensemble of social relations characterized by historical movement.

Authoritarianism research is presently situated at a curious intersection and interest is now greater than in the preceding

²¹Indeed, if he is correct, Žižek demonstrates how things like charismatic leadership and demonology constitute, like money, "anamorphic spots" that remain incomprehensible from an "objective" gaze: signifiers such as "the Jew" are "posited by desire itself. The paradox of desire is that it posits retroactively its own cause, i.e., the object *a* is an object that can be perceived only by a gaze 'distorted' by desire, an object that *does not exist* for an 'objective' gaze" (1991, p.12).

forty years. The fate of *The Authoritarian Personality* offers us an object lesson in what happens when research is, on the one hand, politically ambushed and, on the other, reduced to its most convenient instruments at the expense of everything else. The various disciplines and currents of thought that meet at the problem of authoritarianism now face the possibility of generating a cross-fertilized dialogue or simply ignoring each other. New formations of Spirit are, as Hegel said,

the prize at the end of a complicated, tortuous path and of just as variegated and strenuous an effort. It is the whole which, having traversed its content in time and space, has returned into itself, and is the resultant simple concept of the whole. But the actuality of this simple whole consists in those various shapes and forms which have become its moments, and which will now develop and take shape afresh, (this time in the new element, in their newly acquired meaning ([1807] 1977, p.7).

I might, if I were so bold, interpolate Hegel's passage by stressing that Spirit will never accomplish this feat, if, in its haste and disregard for itself, it fails to notice what it has accomplished in the guise of this or that line of thinking – relegating itself to prolonged fragmentation and castigating itself for not possessing truthful content.

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